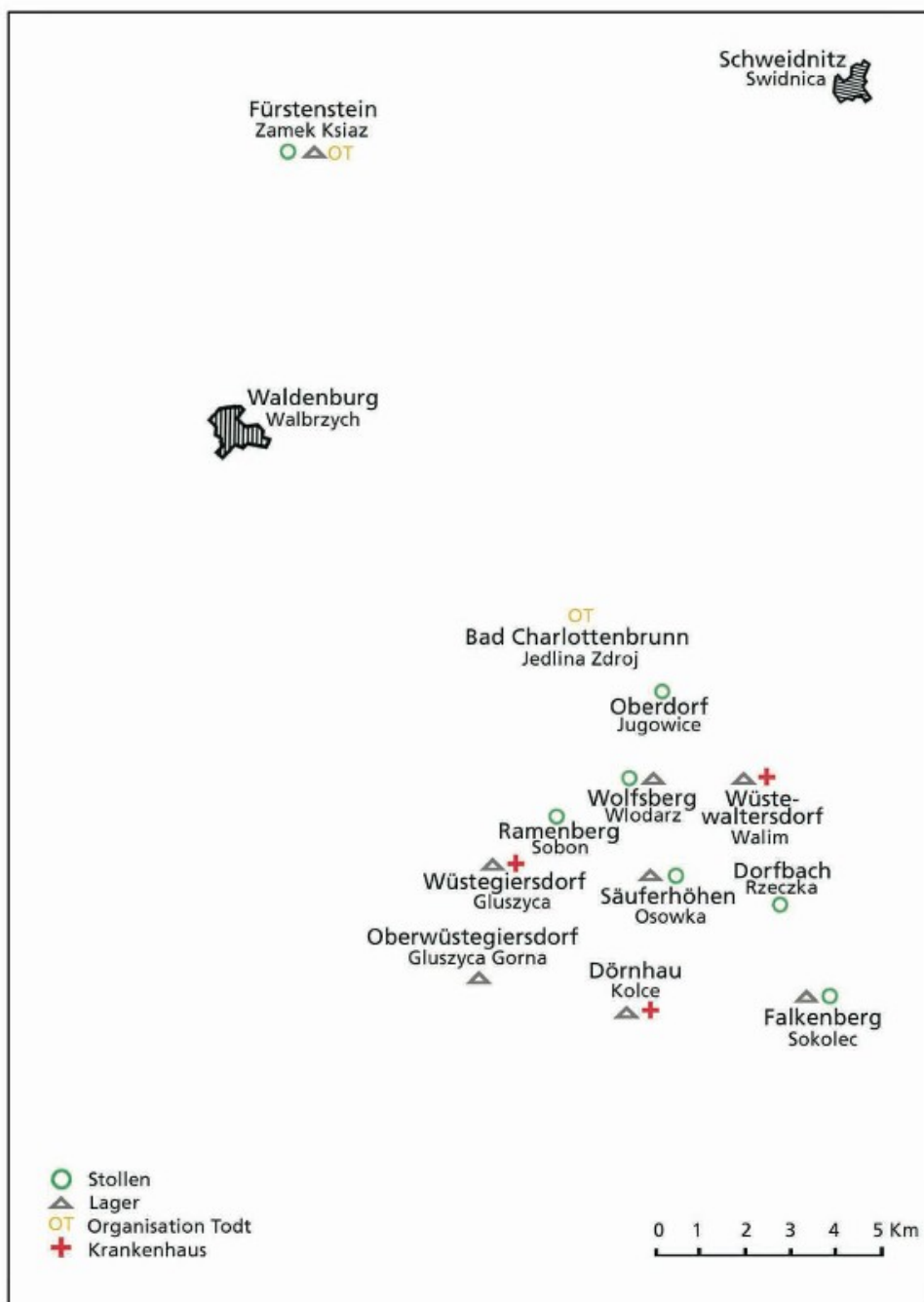


"Complex Riese"

If you drive from the Silesian town of Schweidnitz towards the Owl Mountains, you pass several places and buildings which were once part of a single, large-scale construction project. At first glance, these places do not seem to be connected in any way, however. Some of them are marked explicitly as historical sites. Some lie hidden behind inconspicuous village names. Others only become visible when you are actually looking for them. The aim of this website is to support you in finding your way around the "Complex Riese".



Dear Reader!

This brochure is supposed to help you in organizing a round tour through the so-called "Komplex Riese." On the following pages, you will find short texts on individual places related to the complex. Within these texts, several terms are printed in italics; in the chapters titled Glossary and Biographies you will find further information on these terms. Thus, we hope to give you a better understanding of the different sites within the construction project "Riese" ("Giant") as well as its historical context.

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ROUND TOUR

The "Complex Riese"

Extensive construction work on a number of underground shelters and tunnels took place in the Owl Mountains (a part of the Giant Mountains) between 1943 and 1945. The exact purpose of these facilities remains unclear even today. German sources suggest that they were supposed to be turned into a huge underground shelter covering more than 35 square kilometres, with one of Adolf Hitler's *Führer Headquarters* at its centre. Furthermore, it was planned to be used as a refuge for the leading members of the military as well as a safe place for certain industrial facilities. The construction work was done by forced labourers from *concentration camps*. In this case, they came from the *KZ Groß-Rosen*. They were housed in a number of *Außenlagern* (sub-camps or satellite camps) called "AL Riese" in the immediate vicinity to the tunnels and other construction sites related to the "Complex Riese."

The Tunnels

As of today, seven systems of shelters and tunnels belonging to the "Komplex Riese" are known to exist in the Owl Mountains. They are found at Dorfbach/Rzeczka, Obersdorf/Jugowice, Wolfsberg/Wlodarz, Ramenberg/Soboul, Falkenberg/Sokolec, on the slopes of the Säuerhöhen/Osowka and near Castle Fürstensein/Zamek Skiaz. They are all of a similar design, corresponding to the layout of other subterranean *Führer Headquarters*. The site at Dorfbach covered 2500 square metres, 15% of the walls had already been covered with concrete, and it had three different entrance points. The tunnels at Obersdorf are only 500 m long, while work on the shelters on the slopes of the Säuerhöhen had progressed somewhat further: here, two major and four minor tunnels with a total length of 1700 m were built. This particular facility also featured an elevator shaft leading to buildings in the forest above. The tunnels at Ramenberg have three entrances and a total length of 700 m. Construction on surface buildings had begun

here, as well. Today, three of these sites are run by private owners and can be visited by tourists: Wolfsberg, Walim and Säuferhöhen. On entering the tunnels, the true scope of this wholly unrealistic construction project becomes obvious. It is only one example of *Nazi megalomania*.

"AL Riese" - Satellite Camps ("Außenlager") of KZ Groß-Rosen

(Wüstegiersdorf/Gluszyc a, Dörnhau/Kolce, Oberwüstegiersdorf/Gluszyc a Gorna, Wüstewaltersdorf/Walim)

A majority of the prisoners who had to do forced labour during the construction of "Riese" were housed in 4 large subcamps: *Wüstegiersdorf, Dörnhau, Oberwüstegiersdorf* and *Wüstewaltersdorf*.

In these four villages, the prisoners lived in local factory buildings. Thus, the prisoners and the local residents were in visual contact with each other on a regular basis, which is depicted in a very impressive manner in the *Memories of a Wüstegiersdorf Resident*.

One geographical particularity about Silesia is the fact that the region belongs to the former eastern

territories of the German Reich whose inhabitants were almost all expelled after the war. Due to the forced migration of people from eastern Poland to Silesia, there has been only a small number of contemporary eye witness reports about the events related to "Komplex Riese."

Castle Fürstenstein and Castle Bad Charlottenbrunn

Castle *Fürstenstein/Zamek Ksiaz* as well as Castle *Bad Charlottenbrunn/Jedlina Zdroj* are still sites worth seeing and are gradually opened for tourism. Here, the *Organisation Todt (OT)*, which was responsible for all the construction work to be done, and its construction manager *Xaver Dorsch* had established their general base of operations in 1944. This organisation, founded by *Fritz Todt*, was charged by *Albert Speer* with the implementation of his plans after the initial contractor, the "Schlesische Industriegemeinschaft AG" (the "Silesian Industrial Community Corporation"), was deemed too inefficient in their work. Moreover, Castle *Fürstenstein* was supposed to be turned into

a prestigious residence
for Hitler.

Former Officers' Mess

The remnants of the officers' mess in the forest close to the tunnel system at Wolfsberg/Wlodarz acts as a clear indicator for the presence of the military commanders stationed at "AL Riese"; the officers' mess was their dining hall.

Despite their undisputed function these ruins in the forest have become part of a mythic construct about the possible purposes of the tunnel systems, consisting of a large number of conspiracy theories, legends and myths about "*Komplex Riese*."

These myths are upheld primarily to exploit the full touristic potential of the tunnels.

GLOSSARY

The Satellite Camps of KZ Groß-Rosen

The national socialists started expanding the subcamp system of Groß-Rosen in 1942. At that time, the first so-called work camp - Breslau-Lissa - was set up. Further expansions had to be postponed until 1944. This delay had become necessary due to a shortage of labour in the industry of Lower Silesia, caused by the conscription of many young German citizens into the armed forces and the relocation of arms industry facilities to the region. Forced labour camps for Jews, run by the "Organisation Schmelt", were also under the command of Groß-Rosen's administration. In Lower Silesia, the Sudetes and the region around Luban, a total of 100 satellite camps were built, always in close vicinity to local arms industry facilities. Among the largest ones were: AL Fünfteichen, 4 camps in Breslau, AL Dyhenfurth, AL Landeshut and AL Riese. Among the businesses who profited from the workers in the subcamps were: a chemical company in Dyhenfurth (which became the chemical company "Rokita"

in Brzeg Dolny after the war), an armament factory in Fünfteichen (the car factory "Jelcz" in Laskowice after the war) and the factory "FAMO" in Breslau where - among other things - plane engines and military vehicles were built ("Dolmel" in Wroclaw after the war). The satellite camps were divided into three different categories: camps for female Jewish prisoners from Poland and Hungary, camps for male and female prisoners, and camps exclusively reserved for men. The women were housed in subcamps where - just like the men - they had to work for the arms as well as the textile industry. Towards the end of the war, they were also used to erect antitank obstacles and to dig trenches.

Außenlager Riese (Sub- camp Riese)

The "AL Riese" of the KZ Groß-Rosen consisted of 4 major and 12 minor camps. They were run by the OT, as all prisoners kept there were assigned to the construction of "Komplex Riese." It is estimated that between 1943 and 1945 a total of 13,300 prisoners were living in the camps, guarded by 853 men.

These guards were under the command of seven Wehrmacht officers, who themselves were under the command of SS Head Storm Leader Karl Beblo. Head of administration was SS Senior Storm Leader Albert Lütkemeyer. The camp physician was Dr Heinrich Rindfleisch, to whom 63 physicians and 56 nurses from among the camp inmates were assigned. Starting in autumn 1944, he worked in the new central infirmary in Dörnau. It is known that 3648 prisoners died of disease and exhaustion, caused by bad living conditions in the camp, malnutrition, hard physical labour and abuse. The deportation of 857 exhausted prisoners to Auschwitz as well as 14 planned executions after failed escape attempts are also documented. Upon the impending arrival of the Red Army, the camp was evacuated. Up to 9,000 prisoners were taken via Trautenau to Flossenbürg, Bergen-Belsen and the Mauthausen subcamp Ebensee. Several thousands were left behind and freed by the Red Army. Even after the liberation many former inmates died from long-term consequences of their time in the camps; so when talking about Komplex Riese, a total number of 5,000

victims who lost their lives would probably be the most appropriate estimate.

Individual Camps of "AL Riese"

The first camp of "AL Riese" was in Wüstegiersdorf/Tannhausen. Up to 2,000 prisoners were kept in a three-storey factory building surrounded by a barbed wire fence. The inmates were guarded by 75 men. Most prisoners were used for the construction of tunnels and railways at Ramenberg and Säufferhöhen. They were also assigned to other work related to the construction of Komplex Riese. Some inmates of the camp were selected for deportation to Auschwitz by camp physician Rindfleisch. The factory building was again used for the manufacture of technical components after the war had ended.

In late 1943, another camp was set up in a factory building at Dörnau; in 1944, it had to be completely evacuated and re-established after an outbreak of typhoid fever. Up to 2,000 prisoners were kept in this camp. Starting in mid-1944, this camp was used as a central infirmary, located on the second floor of the building. Many patients died due

to wilful neglect. The prisoners were used for street construction work, sewer work and underground construction work related to Komplex Riese. After the liberation of the remaining inmates the building was returned to its original purpose as a factory.

In November 1943, a camp with about 1,500 inmates was set up in a closed-down weaving mill in Wüstewaltersdorf. After the camp's evacuation made necessary by an outbreak of typhoid fever in June 1944, a hospital with 600 beds for OT employees replaced the camp.

The camp in Oberwüstegiersdorf was also called "Schotterwerk" ("gravel mill"). The 400 to 500 prisoners kept there worked in a quarry supplying the construction sites at Säuferhöhen and Ramenberg. The ruins of the barracks can be seen even today.

Camp Wolfsberg - situated between Hausdorf und Wüstewaltersdorf - was the largest camp of AL Riese. According to historical sources, about 3,000 prisoners were kept there in November 1944. They had to do excavation work on the tunnels as well as other work related

to construction and transport of supplies. Many of the inmates lived in tents, i.e., their living conditions were especially horrible in autumn and winter. 612 deaths due to work accidents, exhaustion, disease and planned execution are known to have occurred in Wolfsberg. The camp was evacuated as early as February 1945. Ruins of the camp can still be found in the forest. Moreover, there is a large number of petrified cement sacks - remains of the camp's former storerooms.

In November 1944, a central infirmary was set up in Tannhausen; in contrast to the infirmary in Dörnhau it was reserved for patients with a good chance of recovery. The patients were housed in four brick barracks. Although the infirmary was officially closed in February 1945, it still remained in use until the end of the war. Three barracks are used today as residential homes and a kindergarten.

In June 1944, a camp for about 800 prisoners was set up in the Märzbach Valley near Wüstegiersdorf. The prisoners worked on the tunnel at Ramenberg. Here, Dr Rindfleisch performed selections as

well, leading to the deportation of about 30 inmates to Auschwitz. In October 1944, the commander of "AL Riese", Lütkemeyer, had all prisoners under the age of 16 brought to Märzbach Valley. These 301 minors were deported to Auschwitz. All over the local area, some remnants of the camp can still be seen today.

Between the camps at Märzbach Valley and Kaltwasser, Camp Lärche was set up. Although it was built rather late - in December 1944 -, up to 2,000 prisoners were kept there. They were used for construction work on the Ramenberg part of Komplex Riese. The gradual closing of this camp already began in January 1945. Up until today, remnants of buildings and streets remain visible.

Camp Säuferwasser was near Dörnhau. Set up in August 1944, about 500 prisoners were kept here. Their task was to work on the tunnels on the slope of the Säufferhöhen and the surrounding buildings.

Camp Fürstenstein was set up near the castle of the same name. Here, between 700 and 1,000 prisoners were kept, who were mainly used for excavation work

underneath the castle. A memorial plaque points out the remaining ruins of the camp.

Camp Kaltwasser was located between Oberwüstegiersdorf and Kaltwasser. Starting in August 1944, up to 2,000 prisoners were kept there. The inmates were guarded by about a 100 members of the SS who - according to witnesses - did not refrain from violent acts. The camp was closed in December 1944. Up until today, the foundations of several buildings remain visible.

Camp Falkenberg was located between Ludwigsdorf and Falkenberg. Up to 1,500 prisoners were kept there who had to work on the local tunnel system. The camp was closed in February 1945. Ruins of the barracks can still be seen in the area.

Camp Erlenbusch was set up in May 1944 with a total capacity for up to 500 prisoners. They were responsible for supplying the tunnels at Wolfsberg and Hausdorf with construction materials. In May 1945, the SS fled from the Red Army, leaving the inmates behind. No visible remnants of this camp remain.

Bad Charlottenbrunn

Until the 18th century, Bad Charlottenbrunn - a village near Waldenburg - was part of the Duchy of Swidnica.

During the Second World War, two different institutions used the fact that the village was very close to the Owl Mountains, and so the local 17th century palace became the seat of their respective main administrations - first for the corporation called "Schlesische Industriegemeinschaft" ("Silesian Industrial Community") and then for the "Organisation Todt.". In April/May 1944 a sub-camp - "AL Tannhausen" - was set up in Bad Charlottenbrunn. The first prisoners arriving at "AL Tannhausen" were Greek, Polish and Hungarian Jews. They worked on tunnels and railways, and they also had to load and unload freight cars.

Führer Headquarter "Riese"

Only after the invasion of Poland had begun in 1939, shelters for political and military leaders of the Third Reich were built. Since Adolf Hitler was the political as well as the military leader of Nazi Germany, all

places where he and his inner circle of confidantes were supposed to be staying for a certain amount of time were called Führerhauptquartiere ("Führer Headquarters"; FHQ for short) after 1938. Furthermore, the headquarter was the command centre for many military decisions taken during the Second World War, all of which ultimately had to be sanctioned by Hitler himself. During the invasion of Poland Hitler reigned and gave his orders from a special train, but starting 1939 a growing number of Führer Headquarters were built as more permanent bases of operations. Construction began on 20 Führer Headquarters, not all of which were finished, however. The best-known example for such a Führer Headquarter probably is the "Wolfsschanze" (or "Wolf's Lair"). Certain strategic features of a given site were crucial to the decision whether to build an FHQ there: it had to be connected to a traffic system and offer specific defence and cover options; moreover, a train station with appropriate shelter for the special train had to be nearby. It also had to be close to an airport and it had to be connected to a long-distance

communications network (because it was necessary to give direct orders and also receive the latest information on developments in the field).

Two authors - Franz W. Seidler and Dieter Zeigert - assume that the complex in the Owl Mountains is a Führer Headquarter whose construction was never finished. They point to a file opened by Siegfried Schmelcher, the architect of the complex; in this file - called "Geheime Reichs-sache 91/44" ("Secret Affair of the Reich 91/44") - Schmelcher compiled data and information on all other FHQ previously built by the *Organisation Todt*. Moreover, Seidler and Zeigert name the diaries of Leo Müller, Schmelcher's representative, as further sources to prove their theory.

In September 1943, Minister of Armaments Speer, OT head of operations Dorsch and OT senior construction manager Müller started talks on the "Riese" project; in November of the same year, construction efforts in the Owl Mountains began. Judging from its location it was supposedly planned to become a contingency facility for the Wolfsschanze. From

here, all operations in the east were to be coordinated. Plans included building subterranean work and living spaces not only for the Führer Headquarter itself, but also for the "Oberkommando des Heeres" (OKH, "Army High Command"), the "Oberkommando der Luftwaffe" (OKL, "Air Force High Command"), the Reich Leader SS and the Foreign Minister. Additionally, quarters for support and security forces were to be created. In the Owl Mountains, there were also plans for an underground industrial facility similar to the one in Mittelbau-Dora. The stated goal was to have bomb-proof work and living spaces until August 1945. The costs for the construction of this facility were estimated at 130 million Reichsmark - four times the sum invested in the creation of the Wolfsschanze. All underground facilities were at the top of the priority list for the construction effort. Komplex Riese went beyond the scope of all earlier projects of a comparable nature. It consisted of ten individual, self-contained facilities on an area covering more than 10 square kilometres, not including Castle Fürstenstein which was also part of the

complex.
The Owl Mountains offered an excellent spot to build an FHQ. However, the region was not connected to the telegraph network, with the nearest telegraph station being in Schweidnitz. Supply problems slowed work on the telegraph line down to a crawl. It can be assumed that the construction work on the buildings also suffered from such shortfalls. According to calculations, an average of 9500 workers would have been necessary to build the complex as planned. Furthermore, 359,100 cubic metres of concrete were needed. If Riese had been finished, this would have been the largest amount of concrete used for any FHQ. The entire complex would have covered an area of 194,232 square metres, with the bomb shelter for the FHQ taking up about 5,000 square meters alone. The file mentioned above also contained a breakdown of the planned magnitude for Komplex Riese. According to this list, the facility was designed to give shelter to 27,244 people. The actual blueprints for Riese, however, have been lost, making a detailed reconstruction impossible. Only the remnants still visible

today as well as the sources mentioned above shed at least some light on this construction project.

Fürstenstein

In 1943, the "Organisation Todt" moved into Castle Fürstenstein (the castle itself was built in the 13th century) to use it as their base of operations. Extensive restructuring began to prepare the castle for its role within Komplex Riese. 35 architects were hired for this part of the project. At the instigation of the authorities terraces and water conduits were destroyed, granite portals smashed, stucco removed and furniture as well as paintings taken away. The rooms gained the rough appearance typical for Nazi architecture. Huge tunnels with a total length of up to 2 kilometres were hewn into the bedrock beneath the castle. It is assumed that a railway from Lubiechow to the castle was planned. In front of the castle, a 50 metre elevator shaft was dug (the elevator itself was never installed, however). Initially, restructuring work was done by civil workers from Italy; later, prisoners from "AL Riese" who were

kept near the castle were used. About 3,000 people worked on the restructuring of Castle Fürstenstein. In May 1945, the castle was occupied by Red Army units. The Soviet soldiers, who remained stationed at Fürstenstein for more than a year, and Polish looters completed the castle's destruction.

Groß-Rosen

Groß-Rosen was set up as a work camp in the south eastern part of Lower Silesia in August 1940. Initially, it was only a satellite camp for KZ Sachsenhausen. In May 1941, however, it became an independent concentration camp. Prisoners had to work in nearby quarries. At that time, only a few hundred inmates were kept there. The construction of workshops for well-known German companies within the camp as well as the growing need for cheap labour in the local area in general eventually led to the expansion of Groß-Rosen. In autumn 1943, a work/re-education camp for the Breslau office of the Gestapo reserved for prisoners from KZ Auschwitz was built on the grounds of KZ Groß-Rosen. The actual expansion of the camp, however, began in 1944. Inmates of prisons and camps in Poland as well as Jewish prisoners from 28 forced labour camps in Upper Silesia (the latter previously having been run by the so-called Organisation Schmelt) were detailed for this construction project. During the expansion, subcamps were built in Lower Silesia, in the Sudetes and in the region around Luban. These camps were of

various sizes and they served various needs. A total number of about 125,000 prisoners of various nationalities passed through the Groß-Rosen camp system during its existence. The largest group among them were Jews - mainly from Poland, Hungary and (what is today called) the former Soviet Union; others were Czechs, Germans, Italians, Dutch and French. Among the Dutch and French inmates were former members of a resistance movement who had been arrested during the Nazi operation called "Nacht und Nebel" ("Night and Fog").

The most significant characteristic of KZ Groß-Rosen was the high percentage of female prisoners. A third of all camp inmates were Jewish women from Poland and Hungary. The prisoners had to work on the expansion of the camp or in quarries. They were also used in the arms industry, for the construction of fortifications and - especially the female prisoners - in the textile industry. The tragic fate these prisoners suffered was due to: slave labour, horrible living conditions (sanitary arrangements were particularly poor), malnutrition, and a total lack of even the most basic

medical care. All this led to outbreaks of virulent diseases such as typhoid fever; and, of course, the inmates were constantly terrorized by the many reprisals of the guards. Moreover, executions took place in the camp on a regular basis; in most cases, Soviet prisoners of war who had never been listed in the administration files of the camp were the victims of these executions. About 2,500 prisoners of war were murdered sometime during winter 1941/42. A total number of 40,000 inmates of Groß-Rosen lost their lives due to executions, exhaustion, starvation, diseases and general abuse. This number includes the victims of the camp's evacuation which began in January 1945. At that time, transports from Auschwitz started to arrive in KZ Groß-Rosen. All prisoners from the main camp of Groß-Rosen and the inmates of the subcamps east of the Oder were either sent on death marches to the south and the west or taken by train to other concentration camps. Those kept in satellite camps west of the Oder were freed by Red Army units in May 1945.

Nazi Megalomania

Megalomania and gigantomania feature prominently in all aspects of the National Socialist regime; they are most obvious in the official architecture, in city planning, in recreational, industrial and military facilities, in the Autobahn and ultimately in the creation of the concentration camps.

The most well-known example for this mindset is probably Albert Speer's plan for a "Restructuring of the Reich Capital Germania"; Berlin was supposed to be turned into a showcase of Nazi supremacy for the German people as well as the entire world. By using modern, yet stark architectural stylistic devices, the achievements of the German economy were emphasized. Giant monumental structures were designed to express the (supposed) invincibility of the German armed forces, strength, courage and the expansionist outlook of National Socialism. By building huge structures, the regime aimed at awakening a strong sense of unity among the German people, allegedly rendering any differences in social class obsolete. At the same time, the authorities intended to implement a

perpetual and everlasting form of government by adhering strictly to the National Socialist Führerprinzip ("principle of leadership"). As they were being built for propaganda purposes, these structures had to be uniform and of almost unimaginable size. This focus on dimensions typically believed to be completely out of proportion was also reflected in the plans for the intended resettlement of Eastern Europe as well as in the armaments industry and virtually any kind of construction effort. It were these aspects of Nazi megalomania in particular that could only be turned into action by exploiting forced labourers.

Myths about "Komplex Riese"

Background: Lower Silesia was barely touched by any military campaigns during the Second World War. When the Red Army occupied the region in May 1945, they quickly took control of an area whose local infrastructure had remained largely intact. In the Owl Mountains, many questions about the construction project called "Komplex Riese" were asked, but most of them could not be

answered. One reason for this were the migrant waves taking place at that time: the former German inhabitants of the region disappeared, while new Polish settlers moved in who had not been in Lower Silesia during the war and were thus unable to give any first-hand information on the subject. Hence, all the necessary groundwork for the creation of myths had been done, and this general tendency was strengthened by the fact that the area in question remained sealed off by the military even for a long time after the war.

Myth 1. The actual size of "Riese". A 1944 message from Speer to Hitler gives reason to assume that the construction project in the Owl Mountains had progressed considerably further than the tunnels and facilities accessible today. Thus, legends and myths arose about other tunnel and shelter systems that are yet to be rediscovered. These myths do not only imply that the entire complex is actually much larger, but that unknown tunnels and shelters are located somewhere in the mountainside.

Myth 2. Possible purposes of "Riese". The

question of the actual purpose of "Komplex Riese" is of great interest to many researchers and a large number of sensation-seekers. It has been the main source of controversy about "Komplex Riese" and leaves room for many theories (some of which are absolutely absurd). Several of these motifs can also be found in Polish cinema.

a) Work on a "wonder weapon": Many theories fall into this category. It is not known what kind of wonder weapon was worked on - provided there actually ever was one. There as many hypotheses as there are researchers on this subject. Chemical and biological weapons and even a nuclear bomb have all been mentioned. In terms of a possible nuclear bomb being developed at "Komplex Riese", there are entirely unsubstantiated reports about the mining of uranium-bearing minerals near Wüstegiersdorf and the presence of 120 Danish and Norwegian scientists at the site.

Another theory speaks of a secret research centre near Waldenburg. According to this idea, a new fighter plane was being tested there. Allegedly, this project was known under the codename V-7.

Yet another theory claims that the production of V-1 and V-2 rockets was supposed to take place in the Owl Mountains.

Some researchers (with several sensation-seekers among them) assume that the idea of a planned Führer Headquarter was spread deliberately as a cover for the actual purpose of the complex. Adherents of this theory call the German historical sources on the subject matter too obvious and hence entirely unreliable.

b) Lost treasures from museums, banks or archives. Stories about "hidden treasures" are also immensely popular. Among these "treasures" are the still missing depots of several museums and banks, such as the gold from Breslau, the riches of the Silesian noble family von Schaffgotsch or the works of art stolen by the Nazis in all European nations they had occupied. There are also rumours about the legendary Amber Room being hidden somewhere in Castle Bolkow or Castle Fürstenstein. A secret armoured train play an important role in these myths. This train supposedly disappeared under unexplained circumstances somewhere between Freiburg and Waldenburg

during the last few weeks of the war. Another mystery is a tale repeated in several accounts: A number of lorries under heavy guard by the SS is said to have vanished into thin air somewhere in the mountains around Wüstewaltersdorf. Other reports claim that files from the archives of the Abwehr (a German intelligence organisation) were stored at Castle Czocha; these files allegedly contained documents from French counterintelligence agencies.

Myth 3. The Keepers of Riese's secrets:

a) Werwolf "Odessa." Closely related to the legends mentioned above is the myth about a society of persons guarding the answers to the many secrets about "Komplex Riese" and the project's true purpose. These myths focus on groups of Germans who were either involved with an operation called Werwolf (the plans for a clandestine resistance force organised by the regime) or members of independent underground cells. These groups allegedly stayed in the area after the war in order to keep military secrets from falling into the enemy's hands. Other important elements of these myths are the disappearance

and unsolved murders of persons who had information on "Riese" they wanted to deliver to the new authorities. Moreover, there are accounts of mysterious night-time explosions in the mountains; in the myths, these explosions were aimed at removing any traces of the subterranean vaults in the Owl Mountains.

Dispersed groups of Wehrmacht soldiers as well as members of the Waffen-SS, the Sicherheitsdienst (the Nazi secret service) and the NSDAP were active in the Sudetes during the first few months after the war. Most of them were discovered and arrested by agents of the Ministry of Public Security of Poland (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego), the Citizens' Militia (Milicja Obywatelska) or the Polish army during winter 1945/46.

In the area around Schweidnitz, there were about 10 people working for the German underground movement Freies Deutschland ("Free Germany").

In connection to all these theories, there have also been rumours about mass executions of "AL Riese" inmates during the last few weeks of the war as well as about the dismantlement of machinery and facilities within "Komplex Riese"; both

kinds of activities were allegedly hushed up by the Germans. According to one of these hypotheses, the SS murdered about 20,000 prisoners and buried them in a mass grave that has not been discovered until today. Such speculations focus on the camp in Wolfsberg and the facility at Dorfbach/Rzeczka near Wüstewaltersdorf/Walim. Historical sources do not confirm these assumptions, however.

b) Engineer Dalmus: Most of the obscurities and controversies about "Komplex Riese" are probably caused by the activities of a German engineer called Anthon Dalmus. An officer of the German army, he had been stationed at Charlottenbrunn with the local bureau of the Organisation Todt since 1940. He was heavily involved in the construction efforts of the project and particularly with its hasty cancellation. According to some researchers, Dalmus tried to give a very distinct image to anyone interested in "Komplex Riese" by deliberately spreading manipulated information on the topic. There is some evidence that Dalmus was connected to Werwolf and presented the new authorities with

falsities and half-truths about certain sites of particular importance to the Third Reich. Immediately after war, he had no problems entering the former construction site, thus potentially being able to get a very clear impression of local Polish activities. He met with journalists, taking them on tours through the underground facilities and explaining their purpose. There is even a rumour that the engineer wanted to sell the blueprints for the underground city to the Polish government for 1 million zloty.

Organisation Todt (OT)

The Organisation Todt is an institution created in 1938 with the explicit purpose of military engineering. It was named after Fritz Todt, the General Commissioner for the Regulation of the Construction Industry. After the war had started, OT was mainly employed for construction projects in the occupied territories. During the war most military construction projects - and eventually even the construction units of the Wehrmacht - were supervised by OT. Hundreds of thousands of forced labourers, prisoners of war

and KZ inmates had to work on construction sites. OT had a military structure; its members wore uniforms and they were part of a military chain of command. OT was one of the most important specialised organisations within the National Socialist state. Largely independent of bureaucratic structures, invested with considerable authority and supplied with a workforce of forced labourers and KZ prisoners, OT was highly efficient when it came to the execution of their construction projects.

Silesia as former eastern territory of the Reich

In the course of the last two centuries, the Polish region of Silesia experienced several changes of rulership and belonged to several different nations. After the foundation of the German Confederation created by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Silesia became a province under Prussian rule, with the city of Breslau as capital. With the end of the First World War, extensive political changes occurred in Europe, due to which Silesia was given to the two new nations of Poland and

Czechoslovakia. Following some internal conflicts about national allegiances, a Polish part of Silesia with Kattowitz as capital came into existence. Upper and Lower Silesia, however, remained part of the German Empire. After the German Wehrmacht invaded Poland in September 1939, the voivodship Silesia was reintegrated into the German Empire. The end of World War II in 1945 again brought dramatic changes for Silesia: The region east of the Oder-Neiße line was integrated into nation of Poland. The predominantly German population of Upper and Lower Silesia, fearing the advancing Red Army, either fled westward or was expelled >from the area - first in a more arbitrary manner, and later systematically.

Forced Labour in the Third Reich

Between 1939 and 1945 there were about 12 million forced labourers in the Third Reich. They can be divided into several distinct categories: foreign civil workers, prisoners of war, KZ inmates and so-called "Arbeitsjuden" ("working Jews"; this term was used for people kept in ghettos and Jewish KZ

prisoners). The status of these persons could be subject to change, however: for example, prisoners of war were declared to be foreign civil workers so that the protection offered by the Geneva Conventions no longer applied to them; foreign civil workers often became KZ inmates; other foreign civil workers who had initially come to Germany of their own free will were later officially assigned to compulsory services, effectively turning them in to forced labourers. Forced labour is defined by two major criteria: the fact that a worker cannot leave his job for an undetermined period of time and the inability to influence one's working conditions in any noteworthy way. Within this broad and very general definition of forced labour, many varieties and different degrees of oppression are possible. Therefore, four categories of forced labour have been established in historical science when it comes to the Third Reich:

1. Foreign civil workers who had voluntarily come to Germany could leave the Reich after their contract had expired (workers from nations allied with Nazi Germany such as Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia,

Croatia, Denmark and Spain; workers from West or South Europe; most of them had come to Germany during the first half of the war).

2. Compulsory labourers: They had only a very limited influence on their working conditions and their mortality rate was only slightly higher than that of normal workers (civil workers from occupied territories which did not belong to Poland or Soviet Russia; prisoners of war from Great Britain, Belgium, France and Yugoslavia).

3. Forced labourers with limited influence on their working conditions and a significantly higher rate of mortality (civil workers from Poland and the Soviet Union, non-Jewish Polish prisoners of war and Italian Military Internees; Italian Military Internees ("Italienische Militärinternierte" or IMI) were Italians who refused to fight on Hitler's side as Mussolini did. They were not counted among the prisoners of war so that they would not be protected by the Geneva Conventions).

4. Forced labourers with absolutely no influence on their working conditions and a drastically higher mortality rate (prisoners of war >from the Soviet

Union and Polish Jews, KZ prisoners, inmates of work/re-education camps and so-called "working Jews").

After 1941, the manpower shortage in the German economy was immense. Fewer and fewer foreign civil workers volunteered to go to Germany, and a growing number of German workers were sent to the frontlines of the war. Therefore, more desperate measures in the recruitment of foreign workers were taken, eventually resulting in the deportation of people from the occupied territories. The German economy only held its ground because of foreign workers and the exploitation of KZ prisoners.

KZ inmates were used as forced labour right after the implementation of the KZ system. From 1933 to 1936, forced labour was primarily seen as a means of punishment and humiliation, however. Starting in 1937 - when after a brief period of full employment the shortage of labour set in -, the SS tried to gain its own foothold in German economy by exploiting the inmates as a cheap source of labour. In 1942, the SS began to lend workers to the armaments industry and several other branches of industry

on a grand scale. Most of the fees the industry paid to the SS for getting the prisoners actually came from the budget of the Reich Ministry of Finance. Modelled after the camps that had been built for the prisoners of war, so-called "Außenlager" (subcamps) were built to ensure that the forced labourers were kept in close vicinity to their respective work places. The camps were guarded by members of the SS. Living and working conditions in these satellite camps varied greatly. The SS did not pay attention whether the prisoners of the satellite camps lived in acceptable quarters. Food rations for the inmates were reduced twice in 1944; the food supply for Jewish prisoners was particularly bad. A cruel method to increase the efficiency of individual inmates was the so-called "Leistungsernährung" (or "efficiency diet") - if a prisoner worked more efficiently, he was handed out additional food; food that was in turn taken from the rations of other, less efficient inmates. The longer the war raged, the harder it became to supply the prisoners with clothes, and the sanitary arrangements in the satellite camps were

also horrible. Even after the liberation of the KZ and their subcamps, many former inmates died from the long-term consequences of forced labour.

BIOGRAPHIES

Prisoners in "AL Riese"

Murray Bilfeld

Murray Bilfeld was born in Krakow/Poland in 1919 under the name of Manek Bilfeld. He spent his childhood years in Krakow, leaving school in 1934.

After the German invasion he tried to escape from being drafted into the Polish army, but he nevertheless returned to Krakow shortly afterwards. In 1940 he and his family had to move to the local Jewish ghetto, where he first worked as a street cleaner and later as a car mechanic.

From 1942 until the ghetto's evacuation, Murray Bilfeld lived on his own, as his entire family had been deported by then. After the evacuation, Murray Bilfeld was kept at KZ Krakau-Plaszow until May 1943, when he was brought to KZ Groß-Rosen. There, he worked as a car mechanic, and because of his special skills he was transferred to Wüstegiersdorf which he calls a "pleasant camp." As a labourer for the Organisation Todt he could occasionally spend some time outside the camp, which was a great re-

lief to him. In February 1945 he was deported from Wüstegiersdorf to Flossenbürg, from where he was transported to several other camps before eventually being liberated. After his liberation, he first lived in Munich, but he then emigrated to New York City where he became a textile merchant and started his own family.

(Source: Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation; Interview Code: 15333)

Leon Weintraub

Leon Weintraub was born on 1 January 1926 in Lodz/Poland. After his father's death in 1927, his mother had to raise Leon and his sisters on her own which was not an easy task.

Leon Weintraub remembers the invasion of the German Wehrmacht on 1 September 1939 very vividly, as shortly after the invasion a ghetto for the Jewish population of Lodz was set up. In Winter 1939, the Weintraub family had to move to the ghetto. 13-year old Leon could visit school regularly until summer 1940, before he had to start to work as an apprentice in autumn 1940 (first for a metalworker, and later for a plumber).

In 1943, the Germans started evacuating the ghetto and deporting the local residents to concentration camps. Weintraub's family managed several times to hide from German officials, but in the end they were deported in August 1944.

Leon Weintraub was selected for a transport from Lodz to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he was separated from the rest of his family.

A short time later, Leon Weintraub was transferred to Wüstegiersdorf and from there to Kolce, where he - "the only available expert" - had to work as an electronics technician for the Organisation Todt. He had to walk 5 km to his working place every day, i.e. the place he worked in must have been very close to one of the local tunnel and shelter systems. Due to his talent as a technician and his usefulness, Leon enjoyed several privileges, including larger food rations.

His most vivid memory of his time at Kolce is that of a visit to the town of Waldenburg with one of the guards. This was the only time during his entire imprisonment that he actually left one of the camps (except for his daily marches to work). Leon Weintraub remained

at Kolce until February 1945. He was then transferred to KZ Flossenbürg and later deported to several other camps during the evacuations of the KZ camp system. On the death march from Offenburg to Donaueschingen Leon managed to escape and saw Donaueschingen liberated by the Allied Forces.

Due to his physical exhaustion - his weight had dropped to only 35 kg and he was diagnosed with typhoid fever - Leon was allowed to stay in a French sanatorium until summer 1945.

After the war he went to a German university to become a physician, and he returned to Poland as a gynaecologist together with his wife in 1951.

As a reaction to the growing anti-Semitism in Poland, Leon Weintraub and his family moved to Sweden in the late 1960s.

(Source: Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation; Interview Code: 26999)

Laszlo Steiner

Laszlo Steiner was born on 10 July 1925 in Sopron/Hungary. He had a large family; his parents owned a brick factory and were very religious orthodox Jews.

Laszlo Steiner went to a Talmud school to get familiar with Jewish religion. He was active in the Zionist movement and collected donations for buying land in Palestine. His father wanted him to become an engineer so that Laszlo could take over the family business. Being a Jew, Laszlo was not allowed to go to university. Instead, he visited a business school in Sopron where he got his degree in 1943.

In 1943, Laszlo Steiner left Sopron to study at a private arts academy in Budapest. While he was in Budapest, German forces invaded Hungary in 1944. When he tried to return to his family in Sopron, he is arrested at the train station. He never sees his father again.

In March and April 1944, he was kept in a camp that fell under SS administration in late April 1944. Via Auschwitz he came to the "AL Riese" at Wüstegiersdorf. He reports that he only had a straw-filled wooden crate as a bed - which he had to share with one of the other inmates. Blankets always were stolen again and again. There were conflicts between the Poles and the Hungarians in the camp. Living conditions were bad. Sanitary arrangements

were so poor that diseases spread among the inmates.

The prisoners had to get up at five o'clock in the morning, and they had to be ready for roll call at six, before their work day started at seven. His job was to unload freight trains at the station. As Laszlo Steiner had been a student before, he was not used to hard labour, and he had a very hard time lifting the heavy rails. He also talked about having to carry cement bags.

As a member of the work group in the station, you stood at least the small chance to be given some bread by the villagers. During a half-hour lunch break at noon, all that was handed out was a thin broth. During the day, you were given four slices of bread, while in the evening all there was to eat was again the thin broth you knew from lunch. When working outside the camp, prisoners occasionally tried to steal beets and roots from the fields. When he broke his foot, Laszlo Steiner was given no medical care whatsoever.

When the camp commanders were replaced, Laszlo Steiner became the camp's sculptor, as he had managed to impress the new

commanders with a sculpture had made as a birthday present for one of them. During this time, his living conditions improved a bit. However, the camp commanders changed yet again, and not only were Laszlo's privileges revoked, but he was also transferred to a work group with particularly exhausting tasks where he was treated very badly.

When Laszlo Steiner met old acquaintances from Hungary in the camp and they told him about the mass deportations, he lost all hope of ever seeing his family again.

Laszlo Steiner remained at Wüstgiersdorf from May 1944 to January 1945. Afterwards, he was sent via Flossenbürg and Crawinkel to Buchenwald. There he learned that his family had lost their lives at Buchenwald. He survived KZ Buchenwald, which was liberated by American troops.

After the liberation, he found out that his mother had survived in Ravensbrück. He fell ill with typhoid fever and returned to Sopron; his old house had been destroyed and the family's factory closed down. Slowly, he started to rebuild the factory.

In Communist Hungary, however, he was again confronted with

anti-Semitic prejudice. To continue his arts studies he handed management of the factory over to a cousin and went to Budapest. After the Communists gained power in Hungary and his factory was seized by the state, Laszlo Steiner moved to Vienna, from where he emigrated to Brazil with his wife. In the early 1950s, he returned to Austria as a ceramist. A few years later he left Europe again; this time he settled in the USA where worked for General Motors until the late 1980s. He returned to Vienna where he still lives today.

Laszlo Steiner is shocked to this day about having had to experience how people can give up all their most human qualities for reasons of pure survival. He would like to see a future where people appreciate one another for their human qualities and not because of their nationality or ethnicity. To see this future come to pass he thinks it necessary for people to get to know each other better and share their thoughts and experiences. Then, so he thinks, the differences between nations and peoples would vanish.

(Source: Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation;

(Interview Code: 44690)

Kiva Weinberger

Kiva Weinberger was born on 2 February 1930 in Encs/Hungary. His father, a rabbi, owned a clothes shop. Kiva Weinberger grew up in a very religious environment.

He was confronted with a latent form of anti-Semitism in his home town.

Kiva Weinberger was deported in 1944. Via Auschwitz-Birkenau he came to Dörnau. He mentions the horrible conditions in the infirmary and how people starved or kept working although they were sick, since they were afraid of being killed if they did not work. Kiva Weinberger could barely walk, but he forced himself every single day to do the hard work.

After the war he returned shortly to his home, which he left to emigrate to Italia. From there he moved to Montreal where opened a travel agency in 1949. He still lives in Montreal and Miami.

Kiva Weinberger says his life has been greatly influenced by these experiences. His life can be divided into two separate pieces: before the war and after the war.

He also says: "Nazis is an invented word, they are Germans. And these are murderers, not

human beings."
(Source: Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation; Interview Code: 18684)

Eli Sommer

Eli Sommer was born on 2 April 1919 in Tarnow in southern Poland. At only 12 years of age he became an active member of the Zionist movement; he wanted to emigrate to Palestine as soon as he had turned 16, but in order to do so he would have needed to finish school.

Eli Sommer fled from the German Wehrmacht to Lemberg in today's Ukraine, but returned to his family in Tarnow, because he was even more afraid of the Soviet army. He had to move to the ghetto which was set up at Tarnow in 1942. During the ghetto's eventual evacuation he lost his entire family. In 1944, Eli Sommer was deported first to KZ Krakau-Plaszow and then to Groß-Rosen. There, he became part of a transport to Wüstegiersdorf where he and the other inmates - most of them Hungarian Jews - were housed in an old porcelain factory.

Eli Sommer worked for the Organisation Todt for nine months; he was responsible for loading and unloading the lor-

ries which allowed him to have a "more and more luxurious" time at camp Wüstegiersdorf.

In February 1945 he was deported to Flossenbürg from where he was forced to participate in several death marches.

After his liberation, he stayed in Germany for another year before emigrating to the USA.

(Source: Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation; Interview Code: 22582)

Alex Olson

Alex Olson was born on 6 March 1927 in Waldyslawow/Poland. The youngest child of a poor family, he grew up in a small village.

His father was a tailor and the family basically survived on what they could grow in their own garden. In school, Alex felt discriminated against because he was not allowed to attend class on Saturdays and was thus clearly marked as being Jewish. He was often called "dirty Jew" and beaten up by other children. The family is the target anti-Semitic acts: They have to wear the yellow Star of David, the father has to close down his shop due to anti-Jewish boycotts and they have to leave their house and move

into an apartment with only a single room. In 1941, at age 14, Alex Olson is deported. He never saw his parents again.

When he was separated from his brother in 1943, his cousin is the only remaining person in the camps he knows from his old village.

Via Auschwitz he came to Wüstegiersdorf. He worked for a cement factory and points out the brutal behaviour of the local guards. Every morning at four o'clock all inmates had to be ready for roll call; there were no exceptions made, not even for prisoners who had fallen ill. It was sheer luck that Alex Olson survived his time in the camp.

He also speaks about a particular event during one of the roll calls. One man was missing. Until he was found, all other prisoners had to stand in the camp's main yard. It took 48 hours until the escapee had been tracked down the escapee by bloodhounds and executed.

Alex Olson remained in Wüstegiersdorf until December 1944. Afterwards, he was deported via Mauthausen to Erlensee. From Italy he emigrated to the USA where he still lives today.

He says he can never forget his experiences, although he does not

talk about them. Up until today he feels a deep hatred when he hears anyone speak Polish or German.

(Source: Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation; Interview Code: 4104)

Perpetrators

Xaver Dorsch

Xaver Dorsch (1899 - 1986) is only one example for many engineers working for Hitler who could never be convicted of crimes against humanity or other trespasses after 1945. Although Dorsch was highly decorated by the Nazi regime (he gained the War Merit Cross, the Blood Order of the NSDAP, the Golden Party Badge, etc.), he had a successful career after the war - first with the Allies, then in West German and eventually even international economy.

In connection with "Komplex Riese" Dorsch is of considerable importance as he became director of the Organisation Todt headquarters in Berlin in 1941; when Albert Speer took charge of OT in 1942, Dorsch kept a high-ranking position as Speer's representative. The Organisation Todt was charged with the

construction project in the Owl Mountains in November 1944. Moreover, Dorsch was a rival of Speer's when it came to courting Hitler's favour (see *Inside the Third Reich* by Albert Speer for more information on a plot instigated by Göring and involving Dorsch in 1943 - Dorsch had been a party member since the 1920s, while Speer had not). On 29 April 1944, Speer promoted Principal Dorsch to the position of head director and chief manager of the OT; thus, Dorsch became responsible for the deployment of forced labourers in the entire Reich and the occupied territories.

Heinrich Friedrich Rindfleisch

Heinrich Rindfleisch was born on 3 March 1916 in Strassburg. After the First World War, the German Empire relinquished the region of Alsace-Lorraine in compliance with the Treaty of Versailles, and the Rindfleisch family moved to Berlin. In 1935, Rindfleisch went to Humboldt University in Berlin in order to become a physician. In 1942, he obtained his medical license. Rindfleisch had already joined the SS in 1938

and now took up basic training with a medical replacement corps of the Waffen-SS. Suffering from a visual impairment, he was deployed as a camp physician; in 1941, he worked at KZ Sachsenhausen before being re-deployed to the men's camp of KZ Ravensbrück. In 1943, he became assistant camp physician at KZ Majdanek near Lublin. Although no medical experiments took place in this camp officially, Rindfleisch conducted his own experiments on the inmates. He was also heavily involved in the selection process of the prisoners.

Fearing the advancing Red Army in the east, KZ Majdanek was evacuated and Rindfleisch deployed at KZ Groß-Rosen. There, he participated in executions (particularly in the subcamps of "AL Riese").

After the war he was able to continue his medical career without any problems. As early as 1946 he applied for a job at a surgical ward in a Berlin hospital - under his real name and mentioning the time he had served in the SS from 1942 to 1945. Eventually, he moved to the Ruhr Area. Rindfleisch died in 1969 without ever having been held responsible for his actions.

The so-called Majdanek Case finally came to court in Düsseldorf (lasting from 1975 to 1981), and Rindfleisch was named one of the main perpetrators.

(from: Pukrop, Marco: "Dr. Med. Heinrich Rindfleisch. Eine Lagerarzt Karriere im KZ Majdanek." In: Lenarczyk, Wojciech (Ed.): *KZ-Verbrechen. Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager und ihrer Erinnerung*. Berlin, 2002. p. 33-52)

Albert Speer

Albert Speer was born on 19 March 1905 in Mannheim. He studied architecture at Karlsruhe, Munich and Berlin and worked as an assistant professor after gaining his degree. In 1931, he joined the NSDAP and the SA, opening an architectural practice at Mannheim. Starting in 1932, he was contracted by the NSDAP with several projects, and from 1934 on, he was active as planner and architect of a large number of giant Nazi construction projects. In 1938/39 he developed the master plan for the restructuring of Berlin into the world capital "Germania." After the start of the Second World War, Speer was working

on a growing number of military structures. In February 1942, he became Minister of Armaments and War Production, effectively being responsible for the entire war economy. He reorganized the arms industry according to the principle of the so-called "total war economy." Speer's management of the war economy was based primarily on the deployment of forced labourers and KZ prisoners. He was working closely with Heinrich Himmler and the SS.

After the war, Speer was arrested and sentenced to twenty years in prison during the Nuremberg Trials. After his release, he wrote several apologetic books and articles. He died on 1 September 1981 in London.

Fritz Todt

Fritz Todt was born 4 September 1891 in Pforzheim. In the First World War, Todt served as an officer and an observer with the airforce. After having finished his engineering studies in 1921, he worked on hydroelectric power plants and in road construction. Todt had been a member of the NSDAP since the early 1920s. In 1931, he became Oberführer (senior colonel) in the

SA; after Adolf Hitler's rise to chancellorship, Fritz Todt was named Inspector General for German Roadways. He was responsible for the construction of the Reichsautobahnen (a system of motorways), and Hitler was his direct superior. In 1938, he became General Commissioner for the Regulation of the Construction Industry and was now responsible for virtually all construction projects within the Third Reich. In order to build the Siegfried Line ("Westwall"), Todt created the so-called Organisation Todt by coordinating and joining together government firms, state companies and the Reich Labor Service ("Reichsarbeitsdienst" or RAD, for short). During the war a growing number of forced labourers were deployed. In 1940, Todt was named Reich Minister for Armament and Munition, thus being responsible for the war economy and the construction of the Atlantic Wall. In 1941, he became General Commissioner for Water and Energy. Growing doubts about the Reich's ability to win the war led to conflicts with the leaders of the regime, including Hitler. On 8 February 1942, Fritz Todt died in a plane crash near the Führer

Headquarter at Rastenburg (East Prussia). Some researchers assume that the plane crash could have actually been part of an assassination plot sanctioned by Hitler. Posthumously, he became the first holder of the German Order. His successor as Minister of Armaments was Albert Speer.

SOURCES

Memories of a German Wüstegiersdorf Resident

... We didn't learn where the Russian prisoners worked for quite some time. They were led from behind the train station towards Wolfsberg, and so they vanished from our sight. There were rumours in the village that they were planning to build a new Führer Headquarter close to us, and the region certainly would have been a good spot for that, with all the mountains and the vast forests. ... In early 1943 I happened to see a freight train arriving at the station. Hundreds of strange people were getting off that train. In striped suits and matching caps. They were led uphill from behind the train station almost at once, towards Uhlenburg and Wolfsburg, just like the others before. It took us a few weeks to realize who these people were and what they were doing here. ... In Summer 1943, these people with the striped suits all of a sudden appeared in our village. They started to dig trenches on the main street, for laying cables. They also did that on Gartenstraße. We had to walk across a

wooden board from our front door to the actual street, and in the trench below us, we saw these men. Some of them were very young, almost children. Just skin and bone, in thin clothes. They wrapped themselves in empty cement bags in autumn and winter. Now we learned that these people were Jews; Jews from all kinds of places. Seeing these poor, oppressed people, who were often worked to death, we villagers felt deep pity for them. We threw as often as possible. We - I mean the people from the house I lived in - threw clothes, socks, underwear, shirts and most often bread in those trenches as often as we could. You always had to be on the lookout for OT guards and Kapos - guards that the Jews had chosen among themselves. While the Jews were working on the main street of our village, I used to give rolls to a boy - he could not have been older than 14. I always got those rolls from Mister John, the baker, from whom I would pick them up at a certain time in the morning. I did not know at that time how dangerous this was for me. We also had the Gestapo in the village now, and their agents were wearing civilian clothes, so you never knew if you were

being watched. I also have to disagree very strongly with the notion that we knew about the Jews, the concentration camps and what happened there. We were told that we had to know about these things time and again after the war. But no, we did not know about all that. How could we have known? We only heard what the government wanted us to hear. We heard all the news in such a manner that we could not know what was happening in the war, in Russia, in the occupied territories. On Monday evenings, we always had a rehearsal for the church choir; Rector Kerner was not yet a soldier at that time. On one of those Mondays, it was almost 8 o'clock, I was on my way to the rehearsal with Ms. Christoph - we were living together. There were spotlights at the Stengel Bridge, so it was as bright as day. Right across from the Schremmer Häusel, the Jews were working in the icy waters of the mountain stream. It was November, and we people from Wüstewaltersdorf know that November is as cold as any winter month in our region. I turned to Ms. Christoph and said: 'May God have mercy on our souls when the wheel turns!' I will never forget that even-

ing or what I felt and said then and there.

Memories of Norbert Szeinowicz

There were a lot of fatal work accidents, or they sent us to the camp at Dörnhau, the place from where almost nobody ever returned. While I was working for the Organisation Todt, my lungs were damaged and they sent me to Dörnhau, which is where they sent all sick people from the camp in this region.

My first impression of the camp: Human beings looking like skeletons; they could barely lift their legs; every movement meant great pain; most of them could not even get up from their cots anymore. We were handed out 700 g of bread and a soup per day, but the soup was actually more like water. Millions of lice crawled over bodies covered in boils. I had never seen such a pest of vermin in any of the other camps. The prisoners were simply lying there naked - no underwear, no prisoner's uniform. Only a simple blanket. Thousands of inmates died at Dörnhau; most of them starved to death. The victims were not shot, but they were dreaming of being shot, and they were so disheartened that they simply waited for death to come. Those who were still strong enough to drag

themselves outside ate dirt. This is where my friend Leon Berwald from Krakow, a well-known athlete, died. When I saw him at Dörnhau, he did not look like a human being anymore. Because of the boils springing from the lice bites there was pus all over his body. I knew that I would not survive under these conditions for long. Prisoners from surrounding camps were brought to Dörnhau to work on the rail tracks. They were kept in a separate camp. I managed to sneak into that camp. Even though I was suffering from pneumonia, I went to work with them. My colleagues were dragging me along, because I did not have the strength to walk on my own. After a month, when the Red Army came closer, we were sent back to Dörnhau. Luckily, that was only two days before the liberation. The only people remaining in Dörnhau were sick with typhoid fever. Except for Schulmann, nobody from Krakow was still alive. Hundreds of unburied bodies were lying outside the barracks.

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